

Community News

Employees help community build low-income houses

Some JSC employees recently took time off from space duties and entered the world of physical labor for charity.

JSC employees joined other community volunteers on Aug. 14 in Dickinson and began the construction of a house for Rotyra Anderson and her three-year-old son, Rian. Volunteers began the "Blitz Framing" as part of the Habitat for Humanity program that provides housing to low-income families.

"The first three days of the 'blitz' gets the basic house frame up and puts on a roof," said Project Manager George Parma of Engineering's Structures and Mechanics Division. "That way we keep the rain out and most of the future construction can take place rain or shine."

Parma, who organized volunteers from six Catholic churches, expects to finish the house by mid-November so the family can move in by Thanksgiving.

"I help our construction lead, Scott Shepard, make sure the windows and walls are being framed correctly, and that everything matches up when we nail all the walls together," Parma said. "We don't cut corners, we put in extra nails and an extra stud here and there. We want it to be a good quality house."

"I also spend a lot of my time going around and making sure all the people who have volunteered their time to come out and work aren't standing around. There is plenty of work to be done, but they sometimes finish so fast that Scott and I are hard pressed to keep everybody moving on to the next thing. Many of them are taking vacation time to work in some really hot weather, and we want to make sure that they feel like they are contributing, and that their time is well-spent."

Parma has helped organize four blitz builds for the non-profit organization. He has contributed his time for the last eight years and has helped build seven houses for the Bay Area affiliation.

Andy Romero of Engineering's Avionics Systems Division heard about the organization and decided to volunteer to help and to learn.

"I wanted to see what it takes to put up a house," Romero said. "It is interesting to see how volunteers go about doing it."

Besides current NASA workers, retirees also are pitching in to provide better housing for low-income families. During the "blitz framing" Don Jezewski, who retired from JSC in 1984, and his wife pitched in to raise the frame of the new home.

"This is about the sixth house we have built," Jezewski said. "We will work on any house that is here. We expect to build 24 houses in this area."

During the three-day event, more than 100 volunteers helped build the basics.

JSC civil service employees who helped included Parma, Romero, Mission Operations' Michelle MacFadyen and Pete Hasbrook and Engineering's John McManamen.

United Space Alliance employees who worked were Kevin Repa, Richard Hickman and Brian Philgreen.

Lockheed Martin employees including Jerry Brunet, and Joe and Alisha Barcio also participated in the blitz.

Boeing Aerospace employees Scott Wertel, Kathy Albright and Ed Cordes also contributed to the construction.

Working along-side the NASA volunteers was Anderson herself, nailing boards and helping any way she could.

"Everyone will tell you this is not a hand-out, it's a helping hand," she said.

Anderson said qualifying for a home is a long process but well worth it.

"They don't let just anybody be homeowners. There is an application to fill out and a committee comes out to your house and they interview you and after the committee approves you then the board has to approve you," Anderson said. "Then you have to commit to the volunteer work. Hours must be contributed working on another house before you get on the list for your own house."

Anderson, a secretary for Texas Parks and Wildlife in Seabrook, said the main reason she wanted a house was to give her son a back yard in which to play.

In addition to this project, United Space Alliance organizer Bill Hielman began another house next door last week.

"USA is forming crews to work on selected Saturdays until completion in mid-November," Hielman said. "Join the fun, help build a house and give time to your community."

Both projects were organized by the Bay Area Habitat for Humanity program. Since its beginnings in 1990, more than 500 volunteers have built 20 houses in the Clear Lake, Galveston County area. Eligible families must be living in unsafe conditions, have adequate income to support mortgage payments and be unable to buy a house through conventional means.

"This is not a give-away," Hielman said. "Receiving families also provide 350 hours of sweat equity for the privilege of receiving a house on a 20-year mortgage."

New home owners pay mortgage payments to Bay Area Habitat for Humanity, which in turns applies this money to new construction. Ten percent of the money Bay Area receives is tithed to Habitat for Humanity International to build houses internationally.

"This is my first home, and it is truly, truly a blessing," Anderson said. "It surely beats living in an apartment and paying rent increases."



JSC Photos by Steve Candler

Above: The first wall goes up on Rotyra Anderson's home in Dickinson. Left: From left, George Parma of Engineering's Structures and Mechanics Division and Andy Romero of Engineering's Avionics Systems Division prepare to install a stud in the wall of the house. Below: Anderson looks over the three days of "blitz building" progress. More than 100 volunteers, many from JSC, helped build the frame and roof of a house for the Bay Area Habitat for Humanity recipient. Besides current NASA workers, retirees also are pitching in to provide better housing for low-income families. Twenty-four homes are expected to be built on the Dickinson site, many with the help of JSC civil service and contractor employees. Since its beginnings in 1990, more than 500 volunteers have built 20 houses in the Clear Lake, Galveston County area. Eligible families must be living in unsafe conditions, have adequate income to support mortgage payments and be unable to buy a house through conventional means.



Charities receive donations

Northrop Grumman awards community volunteers

Two employees recently received Northrop Grumman's Community Service Award for their efforts to support the local community.

Patricia Doerr was recognized for her volunteer efforts at the Armand Bayou Nature Center. Doerr frequently volunteers her time to provide natural history demonstrations, guide trail walks and proofreads the membership newsletter.

Joanne Ashland was given the award for her work with the Bay Area Habitat for Humanity program. Ashland dedicated her time to helping the program raise funds during a recent fun run.

"Through their contribution of time and resources these employees have provided a fine role model," said Herb Anderson, general manager of the Data Systems and Services Division. "Someone who is not only an active participant within the organization but also committed to improving the quality of life within their community."

Both the Armand Bayou Nature Center and the Bay Area Habitat for Humanity will receive a \$100 donation in the name of the Northrop Grumman employee.

To qualify for the award, the employee must have an ongoing and active commitment to the organization. The recipient organization must be a registered non-profit 501 tax exempt organization and must provide a service open to all in the community and should be devoted to improving quality of life in the community. The nature center provides environmental education and preservation to the Bay Area and The habitat builds housing for low-income families who cannot qualify for a regular mortgage.

"Northrup Grumman is committed to recognizing employees who invest their time and resources to support activities within their community," said Kristin Solarczyk, manager of the Northrop Grumman Data Systems and Services Division's Community Relations Program.

JSC Safety Alert

Potential Fire Hazard When Leaving Desk Lamps on For Extended Periods

What Happened

A close call occurred at JSC when a fluorescent desk lamp was left on over the weekend. The lamp overheated, and the plastic cover over the light melted. A fire, producing harmful vapors, could have resulted.

Outcome Of Investigation

The lamp, designed to be mounted under a bookcase desk unit, is manufactured by the Garcy Corporation Lighting Division in Portland, Tennessee, and is constructed of black metal. There was no part number on the lamp. This lamp uses an old style magnetic starter in the ballast transformer to light the bulb. If the bulb is bad, the starter will constantly try to light it by applying a higher voltage. This caused the lamp case to overheat.

What You Can Do

Observe the following precautions for any fluorescent lamps you have mounted under bookcases, computer hutches, or that clamp to your desk. Even if you do not have this kind of lamp, the following are good safety practices to observe:

- Make sure you have good bulbs in the lamp.
- If you notice a bad bulb, unplug the lamp immediately. Leave it unplugged until you can have the bulb replaced.
- For bulb replacement, call x36661. Do not try to replace it yourself.
- Always turn the lamp off when leaving the office, especially before a weekend or vacation.

What Is Being Done

JSC will replace these lamps upon request. Employee who have a Garcy lamp may call x38113 for a substitution.